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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the Nation of Islam, an Afro-American group headed by Louis Farrakhan, is analysed in terms of the characteristics that constitute a social movement and discussed in terms of social theories that have been developed to explain the functions and effects of rhetoric in social movements. Leland Griffin, who put forth the "life-cycle" theory, has been acknowledged as the founder of social movement study. However, his theory does not adequately explain movements that do not evolve over time. The Nation of Islam movement, in the context of a "steady state" theory, defies Griffin's model in that it does not evolve at all. Generally, social movements seek to change social, political, religious, or economic norms and values. The Nation of Islam does not represent a part of the established order, but maintains a philosophy of remaining separate from the establishment. The group's leader is analyzed in relation to other black leaders, the history of the movement is discussed, and the beliefs of those who join it are reviewed. (NL)

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TOWARD A "STEADY STATE" THEORY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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Background of Study

Over the last 40 years communication scholars have been developing theories to explain the functions and effects of rhetoric in social movements. As of this writing a multitude of perspectives exist to analyze social movements. However, current theory does not explain all social movement phenomena. Specifically, it does not explain movements that do not evolve over time. Central to current theory is the life cycle model. The model implies that social movements go through specific rhetorical stages over time. Specifically, it describes social movements as experiencing an inevitable life-cycle that leads to non-existence through co-option or failure. This thesis contends that some movements do not evolve at all. Such a movement can be defined as a "steady state" movement. One such movement is the Nation of Islam. It will be proved that the Nation of Islam defies the life-cycle hypothesis and that the Nation of Islam actually constitutes a "movement". Finally, the rhetorical strategy that have enabled the Nation of Islam to defy the life-cycle model will be examined. In the context of overall theory, a "steady state" theory seeks to illustrate and explain a greater variety of social movements. As such, it does not supplant the life-cycle model which serves to explain many movements. A "Steady State" theory provides communication scholars with another tool to explain the rhetorical processes and functions of social movement rhetoric that would otherwise remain unexplained.

Review of Literature

Since 1947, when S. Judson Crandell discussed patterns of social movement developed by social psychologists,¹ communication scholars have been developing theories to explain the functions and effects of rhetoric in social movements. As of this writing a multitude of perspectives exists to analyze social movements.

To understand the shortcomings of current theory, the origins of that theory need to be examined. The concept of a social movement "life-cycle" was originally put forth by Leland Griffin. Griffin has been generally recognized as the father of

social movement study. His theoretical articles on the study of social movements have had a lasting impact in the field. Much of today's theory is either a reaction to Griffin or an extension of his earlier work.

Leland M. Griffin's 1952 article "The Rhetoric of Social Movements" was the first article to focus on providing a methodology for examining social movements from a communication perspective. Griffin's seminal essay grew out of his Ph.D. dissertation study on the Anti-Masonic movement.² Based on this work Griffin concluded that research could be enhanced through the use of a specific analytic framework.

Griffin defines movements as having three major elements³: (1) a historical movement is something that has occurred "at sometime in the past"; (2) movements are linear, meaning that men/women become dissatisfied, then they try to change their environment-- their efforts result in some degree of success or failure; and (3) movements have a historical component and a rhetorical component. As Griffin states in his article: "For as the historical movement looked upon as a sustained process of social inference is dynamic, and has its inception, its development, and its consummation."⁴

Griffin describes the parameters of social movement study in qualitative and quantitative terms. Qualitatively, Griffin believes any movement-- social, political, economic, religious, or intellectual-- regardless whether present opinion considers it to have been successful or not, is worthy of study. Griffin suggests that the rhetorical scholar examine not the "biggest" but the briefest historical movement the scholar can find. The assumption is that a survey of this type can be undertaken by the single scholar, who "is more likely to achieve the synoptic view essential to the effective isolation, analysis, and evaluation of the rhetorical pattern of the movement."⁵ Griffin feels the data produced from smaller studies would help identify the rhetorical pattern peculiar to social

movements. This data could then be applied to "massive movements" more efficiently.

Griffin defines two broad categories of rhetorical movements: "pro movements" and "anti movements". The former is defined as "the rhetorical attempt to arouse public opinion to the creation or acceptance of an institution or idea."⁶ The anti movement is described as the rhetorical attempt to "arouse public opinion to the destruction or rejection of an existing institution or idea."⁷

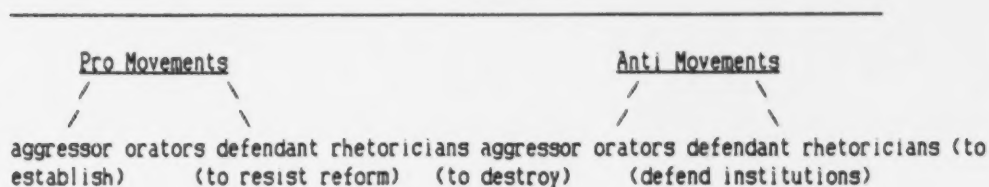
Griffin subdivides speakers in these two categories of movements into two classes: "aggressor orators" and "defendant rhetoricians," which serve different functions for each of the two groups. In the pro movement, aggressor orators attempt to create acceptance of an idea and "defendant rhetoricians" attempt to resist reform. In "anti movements," aggressor orators try to resist reform and defendant rhetoricians try to defend the status-quo.

Griffin's framework includes a life-cycle that each movement experiences. This life-cycle has three phases: "inception;" "rhetorical crisis;" and "consummation." The period of inception is defined as the time where pre-existing sentiment, with the help of rhetoricians, rises to public prominence. The period of rhetorical crisis is described as the time when the opposing groups of rhetoricians succeed in "irrevocably disturbing that balance between the groups which had existed in the mind of the collective audience."⁸ The period of "consummation" is defined as the time where the majority of "aggressor rhetoricians" abandon their efforts because their goals have been achieved or because they become convinced that they are unachievable.

Figure 1 illustrates Griffin's typology.

Figure 1

Griffin's Framework to Isolate the Rhetorical Component in Historical Movements



Life Cycle of Movements

Inception >>>>>>>>	Rhetorical Crisis	>>>>>>>> Consummation
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The primary objective in a movement study is to discover the rhetorical pattern inherent in a movement: "rhetoric has had and does have a vital function as a shaping agent in human affairs."⁹ The final goal of research is to arrive at generalizations in terms of historical movements.

The Evolution of Griffin's Theory of Movements

Even before the major criticisms of the 1970's, Griffin was distancing himself from certain aspects of his 1952 article. Specifically Griffin began to view social movements from a "dramatistic" perspective. Early in 1962, Griffin was invited to read a paper at Wayne Minnick's program, "The Rhetoric of Contemporary Politics" at the SCA convention in Cleveland.¹⁰ The paper Griffin developed was titled: "New Left Rhetoric and the Last Sophistic." During this time Griffin became increasingly interested in the writings of Kenneth Burke. As Griffin stated: "I was curious to see if dramatism, given its somewhat leftist origins, might not be particularly appropriate for the analysis of leftist rhetoric."¹¹

In 1964 Griffin published the "The Rhetorical Structure of the 'New Left' Movement: Part One." This study was basically a descriptive analysis of the 'New Left' movement that made references to Burke's work.¹² Part two was an attempt to use the Burkian pentad to forecast the rhetorical course the movement might take.¹³ After two years of effort, Griffin abandoned the project and started to

develop a theoretical and methodological essay that would amplify, in dramatistic terms, his 1952 article, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements."¹⁴ As Griffin noted, "I hoped that the resulting abstraction of a movement's rhetoric might provide, incidentally, some checkpoints for gauging the progress of the ongoing New Left movement."¹⁵

In 1966 Griffin completed the essay "A Dramatistic Theory of the Rhetoric of Movements." This essay was later published in the book, Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke: 1924-1966.¹⁶ The book was published in 1969, and Griffin acknowledges that the essay was originally intended to be the second part of his 1964 article.

Griffin begins his essay by acknowledging the dominant role language has on human behavior. "Man [sic] is a being who lives by language; who moves and is moved by words, who rises and is redeemed, or fails and fails through words."¹⁷ Griffin views this relationship of language as providing the dramatic structure of collective action. This structure (once again) is linear and develops from "order, guilt and the negative through victimage and manifestation, to catharsis and redemption."¹⁸

According to Griffin's Burkean dramatistic model, people are motivated by order and hierarchy. They become inspired with a new purpose and leaders (described by Griffin as "inventors of the negative") defy the existing order. Thus, a new movement has begun. In dramatistic terms the life-cycle of a social movement is akin to a "drama", "it is to study the scenes that bracket the act, for any movement is a sequence of movements between the limits of before and after."¹⁹

The inception period of a movement is characterized by indecision and alienation. The movement starts with "enactment of the negative" which is a statement of rejection of the existing order. This will provoke conflict from the existing order. In Griffin's view: "the development of the counter-movement is

vital, for it is the bad side that produces the movement which makes history, by providing a struggle."²⁰ The movement in order to survive must prevail over the counter-movement: "negation of the counter-negation" or "the rhetorical killing of the kill."²¹ The symbolic rejection of the existing order is the affirmation of the followers of the movement to create a new order.

The crisis period coincides with mass decision and the resolution of public tensions. This time potentially witnesses the death of the old order and the birth of a new. The decision to establish a new order brings the movement to a period of "consummation." Griffin describes the period of consummation as the time of "redemption." Injustice has been purged and reason and justice prevail. This period brings a new order of self-control, self-restraint, and self-moderation. Finally, a movement ends in "stasis" or the new order of "redemption". Table 1. helps illustrate this "dramatistic" life cycle.

Table 1.

Griffin's Dramatistic Life Cycle of Social Movements

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Prevailing Symbols</u>	<u>Events</u>
Inception	Indecision Alienation Tension	Enactment of the Negative Provoke Conflict Development of Counter-movement Rejection of existing order
Crisis	Resolution Catharsis	Old Order Dies Birth of New Order
Consummation	Reason Justice	Time of decision Redemption Transcendence
Stasis	Love Peace Control Order	"Pendulum at rest"

Life Cycle Hypothesis Remains Unchallenged

Central to both Griffin's "historical" and "dramatistic" theory of movements is the life cycle model. The model implies that social movements go through specific rhetorical stages over time. As noted earlier, Cathcart criticizes the linear model on the grounds that scholars were limited to studying past human interactions.

Simon criticizes Griffin's historical life-cycle model because the defined stages did not identify the rhetorical requirements that must be fulfilled in social movements. However, the life cycle premise itself has remained largely unquestioned. Existing theory require that a social movement undergo an inevitable life-cycle that leads to non-existence through co-option or failure.

A good example of how Griffin's life-cycle concept permeates current theory is Stewart, Smiths and Denton's (1984) life-cycle of social movements.

Table. 2

STEWART/SMITH/DENTON (1984) "LIFE CYCLE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS"

STAGE ONE - "GENESIS" = Cultivation of interest/ rise to prominence.

STAGE TWO - "Social unrest" = "Agitators" stir things up use of devil terms.

STAGE THREE - "Mobilization" = Excitement, Establishment is aware of movement.

STAGE FOUR - "Maintenance" = Turning point, either success or failure.
Effort to stay visiable.

STAGE FIVE - "Termination" = Disbands..ceases to be a movements. Fades away.

Stewart, Smith and Denton go on to say that the life cycle-cycle is a necessity in order for the movement to survive: "Changing social situations, efforts by established orders to negate or to co-opt a movement's demands and solutions, and the necessity to address a variety of target audiences also will require alterations in explanations and content of demands and solutions."²²

However, the life-cycle model is incomplete. Social movements do not neatly evolve into clearly defined stages over time. I contend that some movements do not evolve at all. Such movements can be described as a "steady state" movement.

One such movement is the Nation of Islam. The key issue is the presence or absence of evolution, adaptation or co-option of this social movement. The Nation of Islam's rhetorical goal of the establishment of an Afro-American state somewhere on the continental United States is the ultimate "fantasy." However,

this concept can be traced back to John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry (his goal was to create a separate Black republic through force of arms).

In sum, a central assumption of previous literature is the life-cycle model. The principle objective of this study is to establish that the concept of a "steady state" movement is valid and important. A social movement based on the long-term premise a separate Black homeland in North America represents an anomaly not explained by the life-cycle model. This issue gives rise to deeper questions of why such ideas can provide such long term viability for a social movement.

The Nation of Islam as a Social Movement

One possible explanation of the Nation of Islam not being accounted for by current social movement theory would be that the Nation of Islam does not qualify as a "social movement." In order to establish the Nation of Islam as a "movement," a comprehensive definition of what actually constitutes a social movement is applied to demonstrate that the Nation of Islam qualifies as a "social movement."

Several scholars have attempted to define the term "social movement." These attempts can be grouped in areas.²³ One group of scholars defines social movements in very broad terms. Sillars defines social movements as "collective actions which are perceived by the critic."²⁴ Such a definition would allow scholars to self-define his/her area of research.

Other scholars define social movement in more sociological terms. Wilson describes a social movement as "a conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about or to resist large-scale change in the social order by noninstitutionalized means."²⁵

A third group of scholars has attempted to define social movement in rhetorical terms. Wilkinson defines social movements as "language strategies by which a significantly vocal part of an established society, experiencing

together a sustained dialectical tension growing out of moral conflict, agitate to induce cooperation in others, either directly or indirectly, and thereby affecting the status quo."²⁶ Cathcart describes social movements as emerging "when the languaging strategies of a change-seeking collective clash with the languaging strategies of the establishment and thereby produce the perception of a movement operating outside the established social hierarchy."²⁷

Seeking to incorporate the best elements of all three perspectives Stewart, Smith and Denton, define a social movement as "an organized, uninstitutionalized, and significantly large collectivity that is created to bring about or to resist a program for change in societal norms and values, operates primarily through persuasive strategies, and it is countered by an established order."²⁸ It will be shown that the Nation of Islam meets these requirements, and thus qualifies as a social movement.

An Organized Collectivity

Based on the sociological perspective, a social movement has to possess minimal organization. The Nation of Islam possesses a national headquarters based in Chicago, and Nation of Islam temples are scattered across the nation.²⁹ The movement has a nationally known leader in Louis Farrakhan.

Stewart, et. al., define social movements as an "uninstitutionalized collectivity." This means that a social movement is not part of an established order that governs and changes social, political, religious, or economic norms and values.³⁰ The key distinction is that a movement is not part of the established order, although it can make appeals to that order. Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam do not represent a part of the "established order." Indeed, the movement maintains the basic philosophy of remaining separate from the establishment.

Social movements propose or oppose a program of change in societal norms, values, or both.³¹ Stewart, et. al., identify three general types of social movements by the nature of the change they advocate: innovative, revivalistic and

resistant. Using this framework the Nation of Islam falls under the "revivalistic" category based on it's advocacy of returning to a Black nation state.

Social movements are countered by an established order.³² Cathcart's believes that social movements produce "a dialectical tension growing out of moral conflict."³³ The Nation of Islam has generated opposition from various elements of the established order. California Governor George Deukmejian after a recent Farrakhan speech called Farrakhan a "messenger of hate and bigotry."³⁴ In Baltimore preceding a Farrakhan appearance Catholic leaders promised to "do all in our power to discourage"³⁵ Blacks from attending Farrakhan's speech. National politicians ranging from George Bush, Mario Cuomo and Ed Koch have denounced Farrakhan.

Stewart, et. al., believe a social movement must be significantly large in scope. Though the word "significantly" is relative, the Nation of Islam is large enough to generate large-scale attention and maintain minimal organizational structure. In terms of full-fledged membership the Nation of Islam has about 10,000 members.³⁶ However, larger numbers are receptive to his message. During a 1984-85 speaking tour Farrakhan routinely sold out large venues: Washington 10,000, Los Angeles 18,000, and Madison Square Garden 25,000.

Stewart, et. al., describe a social movement as relying on persuasion to remain a viable entity, "In social movements, persuasion is pervasive while violence is incidental and often employed for symbolic purposes. In civil wars and revolutions, violence is pervasive while persuasion is incidental."³⁷ The Nation of Islam, despite its extremist rhetoric, has not engaged in any violent activities. It relies on rhetoric to maintain its viability as a social movement.

Based on a comprehensive definition of a social movement, the Nation of Islam fullfills the qualities necessary for it to qualify as a social movement with one important exception---it does not adhere the life-cycle model.

History of Black Separatism

From colonial times until the last decade of the nineteenth century, the dominant mode of Black separatism may be characterized as emigrationism or the "back to Africa tendency."³⁸ The nation-within-a-nation concept later espoused by Farrakhan can be traced back to Benjamin "Pap" Singleton's 1879 efforts to create a free and independent Black nation in the United States. In late 1879 Singleton led a contingent of about seventy-five hundred Blacks from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas to Kansas in order to create a new Black nation state.³⁹ This exodus was only temporary; about 75 percent of the emigrees returned to the South after a short time.⁴⁰ Although Singleton did not realize his goal, the concept of a separate Black nation became a dormant seed.⁴¹

The most important precursor to the Nation of Islam movement was Marcus Garvey. In the 1920's Garvey gained the attention of Blacks through his belief that Africa was the true homeland for Blacks in North America. Garvey promoted Black economic independence and organized the Negro Factories Corporation to help organize Black enterprise. The 'White establishment' reaction was fairly quick, Garvey was convicted of "defrauding through the mails" and sentenced to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta.⁴² With the demise of Garvey, the Black separatist movement fragmented into several small sects. One of these sects was the Nation of Islam.

Louis Farrakhan/Nation of Islam

The origins of Nation of Islam are somewhat mysterious. In 1930 a peddler who later was known as W. D. Fard appeared in a Detroit ghetto.⁴³ Fard, using a mix of Christian and Islamic teachings, promoted Black separatism. Within three years Fard was able to establish an organization of temples and schools so effective that it enabled him to retire from active leadership.⁴⁴

One of Fard's earliest followers was Elijah Poole, who upon his joining the Nation of Islam changed his name to Elijah Mohammad. Eventually Muhammad

became Fard's most trusted lieutenant.⁴⁵ Fard mysteriously disappeared in June 1934. Following his disappearance the group splintered with Elijah moving his headquarters to Chicago. Under his leadership the movement became more militant. Members of the Nation of Islam believed that their organization was a Black nation within the United States and that Muslims were citizens of Mecca who saluted the Islamic flag.⁴⁶ Elijah Muhammad explained his position as follows:

We want to establish a separate state or territory to ourselves in this country or elsewhere. Our former slave masters are obligated to maintain, to supply our needs in this zone or territory for the next twenty-five years, until we are able to produce and supply our own needs.⁴⁷

In the 1950's the Nation of Islam began to establish temples throughout the country. During this time the Nation of Islam recruited a man later known as Malcolm X. By 1959 Malcolm X was a leading figure in the movement and was appointed as the National Spokesman for the Nation of Islam. In the early 1960's Malcolm X began to alter Nation of Islam doctrine and started to espouse the virtues of Orthodox Islam.⁴⁸ Malcolm X stressed the universal precepts of Islam with less emphasis on the Black Muslim.

Louis Farrakhan was a follower of Malcolm X. Farrakhan recently remarked; "Malcolm was my mentor...In all honesty he was a surrogate father to me." ⁴⁹ In 1964 Malcolm X announced he was leaving the Nation of Islam to establish his own organization based on Orthodox Islamic principles. Malcolm renounced the concept of Black supremacy and an independent Black state that Farrakhan favored.⁵⁰ In 1964 Farrakhan preached: "Only those who wish to be led to hell, or to their doom, will follow Malcolm...Such a man is worthy of death."⁵¹ Three months later Malcolm X was assassinated. Although it has never been proved conclusively, it has long been suspected that the Nation of Islam was behind the murder.

In 1975, the founder of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad, died. Elijah's son Wallace D. Muhammed succeeded his father and initiated many of the changes Malcolm X had advocated, and ordered an end to his father's racist/separatist policies.⁵² Wallace eventually changed the movement's name from "Nation of Islam" to "The World Community of Al-Islam In The West".⁵³ Under Wallace the movement ceased being a Black separatist movement; and its members did not identify themselves as Black Muslims but as followers of a religious organization based on Islam.

Farrakhan disagreed with many of the changes initiated by Wallace and continued to follow the original doctrine established by Elijah Muhammad. In December 1977, Farrakhan quit the organization and formed another organization (The Nation of Islam) based upon the doctrine of Elijah Muhammad.

Since 1977, Farrakhan has been traveling the country spreading the message that the old Nation of Islam is back. His split with Wallace Muhammad is likely to prove irreconcilable. In 1983 Farrakhan called Wallace Muhammad "the hypocrite" which is considered a high curse in the Moslem world.⁵⁴

The formation of Farrakhan's Nation of Islam represents the continuation of the Nation of Islam ideology as defined by Elijah Muhammad. As such, the Nation of Islam is a legitimate continuation of Muhammad's ideology, whereas Wallace Muhammad's movement represents an departure from that ideology.

Farrakhan rose to national prominence in part through his association with Jesse Jackson during his 1984 presidential campaign. Eventually Farrakhan became a liability to Jackson's campaign. This was partly due to the perceived extremism in Farrakhan's rhetoric-- praise for Adolph Hitler, warnings to Jewish militants, and threats to Black reporters covering the Jackson campaign.⁵⁵

Over the next year Farrakhan embarked on a world-wide speaking tour, including the U.S., the Caribbean, South America, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and

Asia. Through his speaking tour, Farrakhan received considerable press coverage and large crowds.

Problems with the Life Cycle Hypothesis

Stewart, Smith and Denton have pointed out that other social movements such as woman's rights and social movement organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan disappear and then reappear with altered purposes, ideologies, leaders, structures, and persuasive strategies.⁵⁶ However, the Nation of Islam represent an anomaly not explained by the life-cycle hypothesis.

This anomaly can be seen in several areas. First, the rhetoric of the Nation of Islam has remained largely unchanged since its inception in the 1930's. Existing theory requires that social movements, in order to exist over time, adjust their persuasive strategies, yet the Nation of Islam separatist rhetoric has not been adapted over time. Second, the split between Wallace Muhammad and Malcolm X with Louis Farrakhan and Farrakhan's success in maintaining the movement despite an attempt to change Nation of Islam rhetoric indicates the need for a theory that explains the non-evolution of rhetoric. Third, the unfulfilled agenda of creating a separate Black nation state would, according to current theory, result in disbandment of the movement or a revision of goals, however neither has occurred. A theory which explains how a movement that sustains itself through an unchanging persuasive strategy is described here as a "steady state theory of social movements".

A life cycle conception of social movements views social movements as terminating over time. Some social movements successfully enact their agenda and disband. Some movements evolve into pressure groups or political parties. Other movements are absorbed or co-opted by the establishment. A majority of social movements merely fade away. The Nation of Islam has existed for over 50 years and its essential ideology, the call for separatism, was conceived many

years before that. The Nation of Islam, through its unchanging rhetoric, defies the life cycle theory.

As noted earlier, Griffin believes that social movements face a "life cycle" of inception, crisis, consummation, and stasis. The rhetorical study of social movements would study the functions and characteristics of rhetoric in each phase of development. This conception places rhetoric second to the environment of the communicative event. Therefore, languaging strategies are dictated by the stage of development of the social movement. However, a steady state conception of rhetoric in social movements views rhetoric as means to maintain the current state. The rhetoric creates the environment or stage of the movement and not vice versa, and the rhetorical content would remain constant over time.

A SOCIAL MOVEMENT AS A RHETORICAL TRANSACTION

To explain the rhetorical anomaly posed by the Nation of Islam it is useful to view rhetoric as a transaction between movement leaders and its followers. In this sense the producers and consumers of rhetoric follow the laws of supply and demand. If rhetorical demand is present the producers of rhetoric will move to fulfill that demand. If specific demands remain constant so will the resulting rhetoric. Conversely, if demands change the rhetorical content needs to be adjusted to reflect that change or a rhetorical crisis could result.

It is my contention that the leaders and followers of the Nation of Islam are involved in such a transaction. Thus, an explanation for the lack of rhetorical change is apparent. The rhetoric has not changed because the rhetorical demand has not changed.

In the case of the Nation of Islam the rhetorical demands are primarily psychological; self-esteem, the need for an identity and self-improvement. The prejudicial rhetoric of the Nation of Islam serves to fulfill several of these demands.

Another question is why Nation of Islam rhetoric has not been co-opted by other rhetorical entities. It is my belief that elements Nation of Islam rhetoric is unique in the sense that rhetoric perceived as extremist by outside rhetorical entities is securely anchored to the Nation of Islam belief structure. Thus, partial rhetorical co-option is not possible due to internal resistance of Nation of Islam followers. Total co-option is not possible because the perceived extremist rhetoric is not consistent with the belief structure of the rhetorical entities that seek to co-opt the movement. This phenomena is defined as the "poison pill" effect.

Thus, to understand the unchanging nature of the Nation of Islam rhetoric both internal and external dynamics must be examined. Internal dynamics are defined as the psychological functions rhetoric fulfills for the members of the movement. External dynamics are defined as the effects of the rhetoric projected from the movement upon outside forces seeking to destroy or co-opt the movement. An examination of external elements accounts for how the internal/external rhetorical exchange is linked to the internal belief system of Nation of Islam members. A distinctive quality of the Nation of Islam is its racist and anti-semitic rhetoric. The impact of this genre of rhetoric will illustrate the "self-contained" functions of rhetoric and the effects this rhetoric has on the outside world. Both the internal and external dynamics contribute to the long term viability of the Nation of Islam movement.

It will be illustrated that the rhetoric of the Nation of Islam fulfill both internal and external functions. On a internal level it provides psychological satisfaction to the followers of the movement. In this sense the Nation of Islam is fulfilling a psychological need of its followers---specifically self-esteem. Self-esteem is raised through the use of prejudicial or racist rhetoric, self-help, emphasis on Black pride, and the identification of perceived enemies. The use of extremist rhetoric also serves an external function of encouraging distance from

potential adversaries. On this level Nation of Islam rhetoric serves as a "poison pill" that prevents the co-option of the movement from establishment forces.

Description of the Internal Dynamic

The internal dynamics of Nation of Islam rhetoric will be described on three different levels. First the construct of symbolic interactionism explains how rhetoric serves functions which are separate from its literal content. Second, the rhetorical transaction of self-esteem and prejudicial rhetoric will be established in the context of symbolic interactionism. Lastly, I will describe the specific "ego-functions" that Nation of Islam rhetoric fulfill.

Rhetorical Movements as "Symbolic Interaction"

Humans spend much of their time engaged in or exposed to rhetoric. Much of rhetoric is manipulative,⁵⁷ in the sense that the speaker is attempting to cause or influence the listener to alter behavior or beliefs.⁵⁸ The instrumentality of such rhetoric can usually be assessed in terms of the outward behavior or actions of the receiver. However, rhetoric can also serve a purely internal function. Benis commented on one of these internal functions:

The basic unit of interaction that concerns us is a very simple one. One person acts and in doing so intentionally or unintentionally exposes a part of himself--something of what he is, thinks he is, or hopes he is. A second person responds to the first person's act and to his exposed self. Very frequently his reactions convey approval, or disapproval, acceptance or rejection. In this simple unit of social interaction lies one of the keys to the process of self evaluation.⁵⁹

Mead saw the "self" as a social phenomenon made possible through communication of language.⁶⁰ The use of language allows people to reflect upon themselves as objects. People look upon themselves as objects much as they look upon other objects. The theory of "symbolic interaction" provides a theoretical basis of

linking Nation of Islam's prejudicial rhetoric to the psychological demand of self-esteem.

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical framework that was derived as an alternative to traditional psychological views of social reality. Larsen and Wright point out that symbolic interactionism interprets the process of interaction itself,⁶¹ rather than constructing realities that are located either within individual consciousness or within sociocultural environments. This approach looks to the discourse and cognitive phenomena for information about the internal function whose overt behavior is being observed. Some of the assumptions of the interactionist perspective have direct bearing on the understanding of the rhetorical transaction involved in a social movement. First, the features of human behavior which distinguish it from the behavior of other animals are all derived from the fact that humans manipulate symbols.⁶² Second, humans live in a symbolic environment where all

social objects, including the self as a social object, are interpreted by the individual. As Larsen and Wright state: "in order to understand human behavior...researchers must take into account the meaning of things to the covert self whose overt behavior they are observing."⁶³ Finally, symbolic interactionism assumes that individuals cannot be totally controlled by the internalized attitudes of other people. Thus, the individual "far from being the victim of internal and external circumstances, is fully capable of acting upon, influencing, and modifying the social process."⁶⁴

Most symbolic interactionists have a good deal to say about the rhetorical transaction between the listener and the speaker as a distinctive form of human symbolic interaction.⁶⁵ One area of study looks at rhetoric as expressing ego-centricity.⁶⁶ Lyons, who adopts this assumption quite explicitly, explains it as follows:

The speaker, by virtue of being the speaker, casts himself [sic] in the role of ego and relates everything to his [sic] viewpoint...Egocentricity is temporal as well as spatial, since the role of the speaker is being transferred from one participant to the other as the conversation proceeds, and the participants may move around as they are conversing.⁶⁷

Accordingly, symbolic interactionism theory can relate personal identity to linguistic expression. Such a perspective also makes possible the location of individual and social identities as objects of, as well as participants in, a rhetorical transaction.⁶⁸ Symbolic interaction theory can account for realities neither literally represented in the text of discourse, nor in the reactions of others to the verbal symbols. In the context of self-esteem and prejudicial rhetoric, a symbolic interactionist model would view the Nation of Islam's prejudicial rhetoric as a process of manipulative self-disclosure with the goal of raising or affirming one's self-esteem through the affirmation of others. Thus, Nation of Islam rhetoric itself is only "symbolic" in the sense that it serves as a vehicle towards the affirmation of self-worth through the affirmation of others.

The rhetorical exchange between Farrakhan and Nation of Islam followers can fit clearly into the development of self-esteem.⁶⁹ Thus, rhetoric can serve more than one function. On one level it can serve internal functions which are fulfilled on the intrapersonal level. One of these internal functions is the development of self esteem. On another level it serves an external function of affecting the behavior or attitudes of the receiver.

Intuitively the external functions are explicit in nature. The goal of the discourse can be identified from a verbatim examination of the text. For example, if one states "shut the door", the external function/goal would seem obvious (one wants the door shut). However, the identification of the internal function of rhetorical discourse poses a greater challenge to the communication researcher.

In this case, the content of the actual text is less important than its symbolic representation of an internal discourse. Identification of the internal functions of social movement rhetoric is a problem for detailed research.

From this perspective, a clear explanation for the internal functions of the Nation of Islam can be provided. In this case the internal function of self-esteem and the genre of prejudicial rhetoric are linked. Psychological research has indicated that people with poor self-esteem are likely to be prejudiced, as a means of enhancing their self-esteem.⁷⁰ In the case of the Nation of Islam, the lack of self-esteem results in prejudicial rhetoric.

Link between self-esteem and prejudicial rhetoric

Related research supports the linking of these two constructs. Research in psychology supports the premise that human beings have a need to maintain self-esteem. However, in the context of self-esteem and prejudicial attitudes, traditional psychologists tend to view humans as passive participants. According to traditionalists, low self esteem is the result of prejudicial attitudes inflicted by the majority group. However, some psychologists view humans as active participants in the process based on "self-congruity" principles.

Gergen views the development of the self-structure as occurring through learning and weighting of "concepts".⁷¹ Erikson defines the concept of a "learned need" and described the variety of methods used to develop a set of concepts of self. Gergen points out that "although a variety of ways to view self exist, certain methods are more imbedded than others".⁷² One method identified by Gergen is the "evaluative weighting of a concept". As Gergen states: "the person thus learns the evaluative significance of concepts from experience with the surrounding culture."⁷³ Evaluative weighting thus learned "forms an integral part of the person's self-esteem".⁷⁴

Gergen felt that "self-esteem can be thought of as the evaluative component of self concept...which is a person's perception of his worth which derives from

self-other comparisons.⁷⁵ Wylie refers to this idea as "positive self regard."⁷⁶ Wylie states "self-esteem congruence between self and ideal self is being proud of one's attributes highly".⁷⁷ Rosenberg, in a concurring view, contended that self-other appraisal is very important to the specific nature of social influences upon self-esteem.⁷⁸

Gergen contended that if one is viewed in negative ways by the society one may come to accept these concept learnings and to view one's self in terms of negative evaluative weightings.⁷⁹ Some researchers have also advanced the hypothesis that if groups of persons are differently esteemed by the broader culture, the individual group members who internalize this value system may judge themselves accordingly.⁸⁰ Rosenberg contended "that different social groups are likely to be exposed to characteristic reactions from others which may be decisive in the formulation of self-esteem".⁸¹ Cartwright expressed the position:

The groups to which a person belongs serve as primary determiners of his self-esteem. To a considerable extent, personal feelings of worth depend on the sociaevaluation of the groups with which a person is identified. Self-hatred and feelings of worthlessness tend to arise from membership in underprivileged or outcast groups.⁸²

One's immediate collective generalization from these observations is that individuals are likely to be passive and are likely to hold views about ethnic groups which are sanctioned by the majority. Traditional psychology does not make any general predictions about the relationship between self-esteem and prejudice. Ehrich in his review of the social psychology literature stated: "Very little research has dealt directly with self-attitudes and ethnic attitudes".⁸³

Based on the principle of "self-congruity", Nation of Islam rhetoric links self-esteem to prejudicial rhetoric. In this context, the concept of self-congruity

means that an individual's attitudes to others will bear a systematic relationship to the attitudes that he has to himself.⁸⁴ In this context, it would be supposed that individuals who have a poor opinion of themselves are likely to be receptive to prejudicial rhetoric. The function of the prejudice would tend to enhance the ego, or self by assuming that there are groups of people who are clearly inferior to the individuals themselves.⁸⁵ Conversely, individuals with high self-esteem will tend to be resistant to this form of rhetoric.

Ego Function of Social Movements

In a 1970 article, Gregg described several "ego functions" of rhetoric.⁸⁶ Gregg argued that an analysis of the rhetoric of protest revealed how rhetoric fulfilled psychological needs of both leaders and followers of protest movements. This process was identified as an "ego-function" of rhetoric. Gregg states:

But when the search for identity of ego takes place on the public stage, when large numbers of individuals are engaged in a struggle to achieve affirmation, and when the drama of the struggle is intensified by media coverage, the social scene becomes streaked with exacerbating tensions. In such a scene, the rhetorical act exhibits a number of peculiar characteristics relating to ego function.⁸⁷

A clear implication is that the identification and study of the ego functions would facilitate a deeper understanding of the function of rhetoric in a social movement. Gregg defined the "rhetorical transaction" of group discourse as the symbiotic relationship between a speaker and his audience. In this process the speaker is successful if the listener assents to the point of view, claims, or actions proposed by the speaker. Conversely, the speaker's intended audience, having upheld their side of the "transaction" through their assent, expects positive effects in return.

On this level the rhetoric of a social movement is basically self-contained and concerns the "establishment" only indirectly. Thus, the rhetorical agenda becomes more personal in function.⁸⁸ From this perspective the rhetoric of a social movement is fulfilling an ego-function. The transaction is fulfilled when the primary appeal of the rhetoric serves the individuals who constitute the social movement itself, who feel the need for psychological reinforcement. This phenomenon occurs on several levels in the transactional process.

One aspect of this self-addressed discourse is the internal persuasion that must precede any persuasion of outsiders. The act of communication occurs where the leader basically serves as his/her own primary audience and the group identifies with the rhetoric insofar as they share similar ego-concerns.⁸⁹ Leaders of social movements thus become surrogates for others who share his/her psychological needs. One prominent function is constituting self-hood through expression, meaning that the rhetoric must be verbalized in order for one's self-hood to be realized.⁹⁰

In this context the use of Gregg's framework can identify the particular ego-functions being served. Gregg identifies several ego needs that rhetoric can fulfill.

- 1) Need to recognize and proclaim that one's ego is ignored.
- 2) Need to extol the virtues of the ego sought after.
- 3) Need to attack the malicious qualities of the enemy.
- 4) Need to identify against other persons.
- 5) Need for an identifiable "style".

Another example of the ego-function of rhetoric involves attacking constructs such as "the system," "the establishment" or attacking other "scapegoats".⁹¹ Such rhetoric often takes the form of locating that which one perceives as the "culprits" who contribute to the feelings of inadequacy, then taking a positive

stand against them.⁹² In social movements the ego-function is facilitated by the establishment of targets for scorn, ridicule and condemnation. Gregg states:

By painting the enemy in dark-hued imagery of vice, corruption, evil, and weakness, one may more easily convince himself of his own superior virtue and thereby gain a symbolic victory of ego-enhancement.⁹³

The rhetoric of attack becomes a rhetoric of ego-building and concurrently becomes self-persuasive and confirmatory.⁹⁴ A result of attacking "enemies" is that individuals in a social movement can experience feelings of ego-enhancement, ego-affirmation and ego-superiority.

A final important component of the ego-function of rhetoric concerns "style". Style is all inclusive. It refers to style of behaving, style of dress, style of speaking, style of total identification.⁹⁵ Style is an important component of a movement's rhetoric because it relates directly to the establishment of "self-hood".

The concept of a "rhetorical transaction" suggests that a speaker and his audience (in this case, Farrakhan and his followers), are engaged in a mutual, working relationship of considerable intellectual and psychological interdependence. E.U. Essien-Udom in his book Black Nationalism, surveyed members of the Nation of Islam and found most members joined the organization based on psychological need.⁹⁶ The ego-functions being served in this rhetorical transaction are the need for identity and the desire for self-improvement. These two psychological needs are two principal ego needs which lead individuals to join and to remain in the Nation of Islam.⁹⁷

The founder of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad reflected the psychological trauma of Blacks in America: "No people strives to lose themselves among other people except the so-called Negroes. This they do because of their lack of knowledge of self..."⁹⁸ Black history in America has been characterized by

the dominant white society defining "blackness" as an inferior attribute.⁹⁹ In this context the rhetoric of the Nation of Islam illustrates the Blacks' desire to free themselves from the self rejection and cultural alienation which have been their traditional lot in American society. Louis Farrakhan, commenting on the 1984 presidential candidacy of Jesse Jackson observed the limited aspirations of Blacks;

Those (Black) leaders who have rejected the candidacy of Jesse Jackson on the basis that it is a lost cause or that he cannot win are really manifesting a lack of growth.....This "lost cause" argument is used to hide that old slave mentality that still lurks in the recesses of the minds of most of our Black so-called leadership. They cannot see a Black person exercising any power.¹⁰⁰

The clear implication of this statement is that Blacks lack self-esteem. Farrakhan's reference to the "old slave mentality" illustrates his contempt of this lack of self-esteem and its roots in American history.

The second aspect of the ego-function is the advocacy of the virtues of the sought-after ego. The rhetorical function serves to replace negative perceptions with positive strength and self-love. Examples of this ego-function being served include the belief that the White race was "grafted" from the Black Nation; that God is a Black man and that Blacks are God's chosen people.¹⁰¹ Louis Farrakhan tries to fulfill the function of self-help and pride by urging Blacks to help themselves economically: "We all have to realize that this country isn't going to give us anything...We're just going to do it the old-fashioned way; we're going to have to earn it."¹⁰²

Another ego-function rhetoric can serve is the need to attack the malicious qualities of the enemy. As Gregg points out, "if one feels oppressed someone is responsible for the oppression."¹⁰³ Not surprisingly, Farrakhan identifies Whites as the guilty party. The "White man is the devil" theme is a central belief of the

Nation of Islam.¹⁰⁴ This belief manifests itself in rhetoric that belittles Whites as a whole. A minister of the Nation of Islam stated:

The White man has discovered that he is weaker than the Black man. His mental power is less than that of the Black man-he has only six ounces of brain and the original (Black) man has seven-and-a-half ounces...The White man's physical power is one-third less than that of the Black man.¹⁰⁵

More specific "personalized" enemies serve as a better target for rhetoric because of the ambiguities that can arise from an overly broad target.¹⁰⁶ It is within this area that Farrakhan expends a great deal of his rhetoric. Farrakhan's personalized target is the Jews: "The Jews came at the turn of the century..into the Black community...and they became strong nursing from the breast of the Black community, growing up to disrespect the very breast that had nursed them to strength..."¹⁰⁷

Farrakhan cites a litany of crimes committed by Jews against Blacks:

[They] don't apologize for seducing a nineteen-year-old girl and making her take off her clothes [in reference to Vanessa Williams], [they] don't apologize for sucking the blood of our poor people that [they] might live well, [they] didn't apologize for putting my brothers and sisters to live in homes or apartments and charging them the highest rents.¹⁰⁸

Farrakhan's rhetoric fits the Gregg typology in terms of locating the persons, behaviors, actions, or conditions which cause or contribute to the group's feelings of inadequacy, then urging a stand against them.¹⁰⁹ For example, during a 1985 speech in Madison Square Garden, Farrakhan and his audience engaged in the following exchange: "Are the Jews that are angry with me righteous?" asked Farrakhan. "No," yelled the crowd. Dissatisfied with the intensity of the response, Farrakhan shouted back, "What?" "No!" "I can't hear you." "No!" boomed

the crowd again.¹¹⁰ The images of the enemy portrayed in the rhetoric of The Nation of Islam are clearly drawn in a way which enhances the self-image of the social movement's members.

Gregg identifies style as an important element in ego affirmation. Through style an individual in a social movement can define his/her own independent identity as a part of a larger group. The Nation of Islam espouses a extremely well-defined "style" for its members. The need for an identity is a principal motive of individuals who join and remain in the Nation of Islam.¹¹¹ The incentives offered by the Nation also point to and illuminate the style of life which the Muslims seek as a group.¹¹² A visitor to a Nation of Islam meeting once remarked: "I was impressed by the well-barbered, neat and healthful appearance of Muslim men at their meetings...In spite of their long robes, the neatness and bearing of the Muslim women is equally impressive."¹¹³ In this sense the Nation of Islam serves an ego-function for its followers.

Stylistic characteristics of The Nation of Islam include a specific dress code and rules governing personal practices. For young women this can include:

- 1) Do not use lipstick or make-up.
- 2) Do not wear hair up unless wearing long dress.
- 3) Do not smoke or drink alcohol.
- 4) Do not commit adultery.
- 5) Wear long dresses with head covered by scarves.
- 6) Do not wear heels over 1.5 inches.¹¹⁴

The members as a whole must not expend their income on alcoholic beverages, narcotics, tobacco, gambling, dancing, dating, or sports. Family values are emphasized with respect to women particularly being stressed. Elijah Mohammad declared in a 1960 address:

You must stop imitating the slavemaster. Because your slave master wears thirty dollar shoes or a two-hundred dollar suit, you

go and spend your money on these things. You have no room in which to sleep, but you go into debt for a Cadillac.¹¹⁵

For many Blacks the search for an identity is enabled by the stylistic qualities of the Nation of Islam. In the survey conducted by Essien-Udom the motive which led individuals to join the Nation was that of improving one's self or community.

In summary, "symbolic interactionism" provides a meta-theoretical basis that explains the rhetorical transaction of self-esteem and prejudicial rhetoric. The rhetorical content is secondary to the psychological function that the rhetoric fulfills. Psychological research supports the relationship between self-esteem and prejudicial attitudes. Gregg describes several of the psychological or "ego" functions that social movement rhetoric can fulfill. Udom-Essien's research indicates that the followers of the Nation of Islam join the organization based on psychological need. These needs are fulfilled on several levels including the use of prejudicial rhetoric.

Description and Definition of External Dynamic

The ego-function rhetoric of Louis Farrakhan also offers several additional advantages to his followers. It encourages the maintenance of distance from adversaries. In this respect Farrakhan's anti-Semitism serves as a "poison pill" which prevents the movement from being co-opted by the establishment. The use of extremist rhetoric also serves as an "anchor" to enhance internal resistance to counter-persuasion.

The external dynamic of social movement rhetoric can be compared to the corporate merger of the "hostile" take over. Since target management is not a willing party to a hostile takeover, they may design strategies to deter external attempts to takeover the corporations they run. These strategies have collectively been known as a "poison pill" effect.

As discussed earlier, current theory implies social movements face an inevitable life-cycle that leads to non-existence through absorption or failure. A poison pill would exist to prevent absorption of the movement by establishment forces. Hahn and Gonchar noted: "When society absorbs a movement, it typically adopts part of its program and all of its rhetoric. With substantive demands still unachieved, the movement is robbed of its voice. It must either die or evolve a more extreme rhetoric."¹¹⁶

This process provides the basis for a couple of claims. First, extremist rhetoric serves to discourage external attempts at co-opting a social movement. Second, extremist rhetoric strengthens the internal resistance to counter-persuasion. It will be shown how extremist rhetoric follows many of resistance to persuasion strategies described by past theory. In addition, extremist rhetoric creates a new dynamic not accounted for in the "resistance" literature, the "poison pill" argument.

The Poison Pill

In defining where the poison pill belongs in the taxonomy of resistance strategies, it is important to identify the external function of a resistance strategy. In terms of adoption (premeditated or incidental) of an internal strategy designed to provide resistance to persuasion, the adoption cannot be divorced from the actual content of the communicative process. Thus, the public record of the communicative content can be a significant variable in regards to other parties wishing to engage in counter-persuasion.

For instance, if the establishment wants to absorb/co-opt an insurgent social movement, it has to consider its own followers in terms of what rhetoric/positions it can adopt or internal imbalance could occur. In turn, if counter-arguments are too far removed from the belief system of the target group, counter-persuasion will not be successful. If such a gulf exists most likely the target group's rhetoric would be defined as extremist in content. Thus, a

poison-pill would take the characteristic of an internal belief system that was perceived by the establishment as too extreme to be adopted or co-opted.

However, a poison pill needs to serve internal and external functions. The external function would seem obvious, the adoption of unpalatable positions would prevent the co-option of the movement by external forces. However, this process is linked to the internal functions of a poison pill. Poison pill is only effective to the extent that these beliefs are logically and inextricably tied to other important beliefs and if one belief is changed, it would create imbalance with the linking beliefs. Thus, internal function of the poison pill is to prevent followers from defecting to another position or movement, the only way co-option could occur. Therefore the poison-pill is effective on two levels. It discourages external attempts at co-option of the movement and it induces resistance in the audience/followers to any message at variance with the stated belief structure.

Hence, a poison pill strategy can serve multiple functions: An external function which can keep the opposition from attempting to absorb one's position, and an internal function which gives one's audience (or social movement) the tools to resist counter-arguments. As such, the internal functions can be explained by the existing resistance literature. However, the challenge facing an effective poison pill is to adopt rhetoric deemed desirable by one's own audience, yet perceived undesirable by possible enemies.

The Poison Pill in Action

The Nation of Islam over time has confronted two major sources that have tried to absorb or co-opt the rhetoric of the movement: a rival Muslim organization and the establishment. The latter's representatives have ranged from Jesse Jackson to Ronald Reagan.

As discussed earlier Farrakhan disagreed with many of the changes initiated by Wallace Muhammad after the death Elijah Muhammad. In December 1977, Farrakhan quit the organization and formed another organization (The Nation of

Islam) based upon the doctrine of Elijah Muhammad. While Wallace Muhammad formed a rival Muslim organization "The World Community of Al-Islam".

The Poison Pill vs The World Community of Al-Islam

The importance of the ideological differences between Farrakhan and Wallace cannot be overstated. These differences are the key to Farrakhan's poison pill effect. Until 1975 the Nation of Islam stood alone, religiously and politically. With Wallace's assuming control, the movement faced integration into the mainstream Islamic movement, hence the need for Farrakhan and the reborn Nation of Islam. The following chart can serve to illustrate the content of the poison pill.

Table 3.
Difference in Rhetorical Content between Wallace and Farrakhan

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Wallace</u>	<u>Farrakhan</u>
1) Whites	Not inherently evil	Devils
2) Blacks	No special distinction	Chosen people
3) Membership	No restrictions	Blacks only
4) Status	U.S. citizen	Disenfranchised people
5) Policies	Vote	Do not vote*
	Serve in military	Do not serve
6) Identification	Religious	Racial
7) Goals	Change through religion	Change through separation

(*exception made for the candidacy of Jesse Jackson)

The perceived extremist position of reverse-racism by the Nation of Islam has served to retain the distinctive identity of the movement. Operationally "racist rhetoric" will be defined as the use of explicit racial appeals in the rhetoric. This position fulfills both the internal and external functions of a poison pill strategy. The external function is served through the inability of mainstream Islamic tenets to adopt a racist philosophy.¹¹⁷ The poison pill contributes to the internal process of resistance to counter-persuasion through raising self-esteem and through the promotion of a distinctive self-identity.

The Poison Pill vs 'The Establishment'

Having successfully emerged from the schism within the Black Muslim movement, the Nation of Islam movement faces potential co-option of important

portions of their rhetoric by establishment forces. In this case, the establishment can be represented by forces who choose to work within the existing political infrastructure as opposed to remaining outside. An examination of the positions taken by Ronald Reagan, Jesse Jackson and Louis Farrakhan (Table 3) illustrate the poison pill in sharper relief.

Table 4.
Rhetorical Positions of Reagan, Jackson and Farrakhan¹¹⁸

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Jackson</u>	<u>Farrakhan</u>
Race	non-racist	non-racist	racist
Jews	non-prejudicial	non-judicial	prejudicial
Welfare	self-help	self/state help	self/state help
Zionism	favor	oppose	oppose
Drugs	oppose	oppose	oppose

*= Jackson's public statements have been somewhat contradictory on this point. This conclusion is based on Jackson's latest qualification of his earlier remarks

This table reflects the actual public utterances of the three individuals. No doubt some of these conclusions are open to debate, however the actual rhetorical artifacts are the key issue in identifying the poison pill. The key distinction is the explicit interpretation of the actual rhetorical content. Somewhat surprisingly, Farrakhan shares positions in common with both Reagan and Jackson. The key differences are Farrakhan's anti-semitism his perceived racist viewpoints. Otherwise, his rhetoric can be accounted for by establishment viewpoints.

Both Farrakhan and Reagan espouse self-help and free enterprise by urging blacks helping themselves economically. Recently Farrakhan has launched a line of "Clean-n-Fresh" personal-health-and-beauty products to promote this economic independence.

The greatest threat to the rhetorical independence of the Nation of Islam (based on comparison of views) comes from the Black establishment. A comparison of views of Jesse Jackson and Louis Farrakhan shows a great degree of similarity. This convergence of viewpoints led to a tacit political alliance

that might have led to the integration of the Nation of Islam into the political establishment had it lasted. Illustrating this point was the fact that in 1984 Farrakhan encouraged his followers to take part in the political process in order to support Jackson. This action represented a departure from traditional Nation of Islam rhetoric. However, outcries over Farrakhan's anti-Semitism forced Jackson to end his association with Farrakhan.¹¹⁹

Farrakhan's publicly perceived anti-semitism is a key component of the poison pill. As related earlier, it is within this area that Farrakhan expends a great deal of his rhetoric. Thus, the poison pill of anti-semitism encourages the maintenance of distance from adversaries which serves to discourage co-option by the establishment. This is illustrated by responses to the rhetoric of Farrakhan. Mario Cuomo stated: "While Farrakhan says many things we can agree to...he speaks a language of divisiveness and polarization, and that I deplore."¹²⁰ Archbishop of New York City, John O'Connor remarked: "I cannot remain silent about such statements, lest it be assumed that such statements are acceptable to Catholic teaching, which categorically abhors anti-Semitism and racism in any form, under any pretext."¹²¹

The importance of the poison pill is illustrated by the response of traditional Black politicians to Farrakhan's rhetoric. Andrew Young stated: "I agree with about 90 percent of what Farrakhan says."¹²² The remaining 10 percent represents the effectiveness of the poison pill. Coretta Scott King commenting on Farrakhan, stated:

Well, I would say that Louis Farrakahn has hurt in many ways, but I can say that as far as the philosophy of self-help and all of that, and self-improvement, I think that part of it is something we can all agree on...I think that part of it is certainly good--Black people teaching their own people how to live better, clean lives, that kind of thing, and also to be self sufficient. But I think when it comes to

intergroup relations and the kind of statements and philosophy that has been perpetrated, it has been extremely harmful, and I regret very much that this is the case...¹²³

Farrakhan's adoption of extremist rhetoric involves the risk of alienating his own followers. Any extremist rhetoric needs to be integrated/anchored into the overall belief system and any rhetorical discomfort is offset by perceived advantages. A 28-year old word-processor operator from Harlem remarked after hearing Farrakhan: "I agree with about 65 percent of what Farrakhan says, and maybe 35 percent I don't know about...But (that) 65 percent and what it means for Blacks makes it worthwhile going along with everything else."¹²⁴ The individual ambivalence about some of Farrakhan's rhetoric illustrates the delicate balance of retaining followers and discouraging adversaries involved in poison pill rhetoric.

Conclusions

Ego related rhetoric within a social movement yields several advantages.¹²⁵ First, through "poison pill" rhetoric it can generate attention and fear from adversaries which helps prevent the possibility of the social movement being co-opted by the establishment. Through the rhetorical transaction it enhances self-identity, gives the social movement definitional control in terms of perceived enemies and the environment. Finally, it promotes self-esteem through the use of prejudicial rhetoric.

A STEADY STATE THEORY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Definition

The case study of the Nation of Islam offers insight as to what characteristics make "steady state" social movements distinct from other social movements previously defined by communication scholars:

- 1) A steady-state movement persists over time.

For a movement to qualify as a "steady state" movement it needs to fulfill all of the functions of a social movement for a prolonged period of time. The threshold of when a movement exceeds its normal life-span would be a purely subjective determination of individual scholar. This determination would need to be justified in the context of the study. For example, certain types of movements with a narrow agenda would be expected to have a shorter natural life-span than a movement with a broader agenda.

- 2) A steady state social movement's rhetorical content
does not evolve over time.

As noted by Stewart, Smith, and Denton social movements such as women's rights or the Ku Klux Klan disappear and then reappear with altered purposes, ideologies, leaders, structures, and persuasive strategies.¹²⁶ The Nation of Islam's basic message of Black separatism and prejudicial rhetoric has not changed over time.¹²⁷

Characteristics of a "Steady State" Movement

The rhetorical functions and strategies of the Nation of Islam provide an example of the characteristics that enable the Nation of Islam to defy the life-cycle hypothesis.

- 1) A social movement as psychological satisfaction.

The rhetoric of a social movement can serve purely psychological functions that are incidental to the actual rhetorical content of its discourse. In this case the rhetorical transaction between leaders and followers of a social movement fulfill an "ego-function", specifically self-esteem needs. The rhetoric does not change over time because the psychological needs of the participants have not changed.

- 2) A social movement with an anchored belief system.

The beliefs of the social movement are securely anchored to a larger value or belief superstructure. In this case Nation of Islam rhetoric anchor divergent beliefs with religious doctrine. Thus, any attempt by opponents to engage in

counter-persuasion or co-opt portions of Nation of Islam rhetoric would result in imbalance in the belief system of Nation of Islam followers. This potential imbalance would serve to enhance resistance to counter-persuasion or defection.

3) Social movement rhetoric that encourages distance

from adversaries.

Many social movements disappear through absorption into the establishment. Typically when the establishment absorbs a movement it adopts part of its program and all of its rhetoric. However, use of perceived "extremist" rhetoric serves to discourage adoption of social movement rhetoric. This process can be labeled as "poison pill" effect of rhetoric because it discourages the takeover of a movement. In this case the perceived prejudicial and anti-semitic rhetoric discourages opponents from adopting Nation of Islam rhetoric.

Questions

The establishment of a "steady state" theory co-existing with a life-cycle model of social movements give rise to a couple of questions:

Is the Nation of Islam in a prolonged life-cycle stage?

One possible reconciliation of current theory with the steady state hypothesis, is the possibility that the Nation of Islam is in a prolonged life-cycle stage. After reviewing three life-cycle models described by current literature (Griffin 1952, Griffin 1969, Stewart, Denton, & Smith 1984), none of the stages accurately describe the current condition of the Nation of Islam. However, even if the Nation of Islam is accounted for by one of stages in the life-cycle model, the existence of a movement that does not evolve to the later stages of the life-cycle model still represents a anomaly because much of the current literature states that social movements must adapt its rhetoric in order to survive.

"Do any other Steady State movements exist?"

If one applies the strict definition supplied by Stewart, Denton and Smith, I cannot currently identify any other steady state movements in existence.

However, If a looser rhetorical definition (i.e. Cathcart or especially Sillars) is applied then a number of steady state movements currently exist. The major component in identifying the steady state movement is the prolonged existence of the movement and its use of consistent rhetoric. On this level Christianity would qualify as a steady state movement, one key element is whether the movement retains its viability through the rhetorical transaction between movement rhetoric and its consumers/followers. In both cases (NOI & Christianity) it is primarily a "psychological movement", that is the followers receive some sort of psychological satisfaction through its participation in the movement.

Implications

A clear implication of "steady state" rhetoric is that rhetoric can be viewed as a means of maintaining a movement in its current state. In this case, the rhetoric dictates the stage of a movement. A traditional conception of social movement rhetoric views rhetoric as an artifact of a particular life-cycle stage of a movement, as opposed to rhetoric determining the stage itself. Griffin suggested the comparison and identification of rhetorical patterns of movements in each stage of development. However, rhetoric is not merely a reflective pattern of a movement during each stage of development. Indeed, the rhetoric of a social movement plays an active part in the determination and definition of each stage of the life-cycle, or whether there is any life-cycle at all.

Notes

¹ Charles Stewart, Craig Smith and Robert E. Denton, Persuasion and Social Movements (Prospect Heights, IL. - Waveland Press, 1984) 4.

² Leland M. Griffin, Anti-Masonic Movement. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University. New York, 1950).

³ Robert Cathcart, "New Approaches to the Study of Movements: Defining Movements Rhetorically," Western Journal of Speech Communication, 36 (1972): 82-88.

⁴ Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Social Movements", Quarterly Journal of Speech, 37 (1952): 186.

⁵ Griffin, "Rhetoric of Social Movements," 185.

⁶ Griffin, "Rhetoric of Social Movements," 185.

⁷ Griffin, "Rhetoric of Social Movements," 185.

⁸ Griffin, "Rhetoric of Social Movements," 186.

⁹ Griffin, "Rhetoric of Social Movements," 188.

¹⁰ Griffin, "Studying Movements," 225.

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